

The First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham
People Get Ready: Healing
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[Isaiah 40:1-11, Mark 1:1-8](#)

A soldier is running across a battlefield. He is shot in his leg and the bullet ruptures his femoral artery. He has less than three minutes to stop the bleeding or he will die. Even if a medic is nearby with a pressure pack it will take four minutes to stop the bleeding. This was the scenario posed by Joe Landolina in a recent Ted talk. Landolina said that this was one of the problems he had hoped to address when he went to college; to find a way to stop severe bleeding in a short period of time. He acknowledged that others had tried to find a solution. Unfortunately they were not successful because their solutions were two dimensional...sort of like Band-Aids...which while perhaps working on one part of the body would not work on other parts because the parts had different cellular makeups. What Landolina was able to do though was to take a plant derived polymer and apply it to the wound where the polymer would actually reassemble itself into whatever tissue with which it came into contact. The result was the ability to stop a major bleed in...drum roll...ten seconds.

As I was watching this Ted Talk several thoughts were going through my mind. The first was I don't understand biology well enough to really explain any of this. The second was this is a really cool invention. The third, being the minister that I am, wouldn't it be wonderful if there were some compound we could spread on the world to stop its bleeding. Today, being Pearl Harbor Day, it is appropriate for us to remember how much blood has been spilled over the last hundred years; two world wars, countless conflicts, millions upon millions dead. And we need to remember, as if the evening news would ever allow us to forget the blood that is still being shed in virtually every part of the world; blood shed over religion, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality and a host of other reasons. So wouldn't it be wonderful if there was a compound, a balm and mixture that would heal the wounds of humanity.

In some ways this healing has been the project on which God has been working since the dawn of humanity; trying to heal the wounds of the world. From the calling of Abraham, to the giving of the Law, to our two stories this morning, we read of God trying to heal the hurts. Our Isaiah story concerns God healing the hurts of God's people by bringing them home from exile. For those of you who were with us last week we talked about God's people sleepwalking through life and ignoring God's desires for trust and compassion. The result was that their nation was destroyed by the Babylonians. Now God brings them home saying, "Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that she has served her term." Our story in Mark has John the Baptist telling the people that God is sending someone who will baptize them with the Holy Spirit, who is God's agent of healing and restoration. In other words, in Jesus real healing would be possible.

The question with which this leaves us then is, "If Jesus came, taught, died and was raised from the dead...and thus made healing of the wounds of the world possible, why isn't the world healed?"

Why are there still so many wounds which are tearing the world apart?" My answer is, unfortunately we have not applied the love, grace, compassion and forgiveness of Jesus often or well enough to the world's wounds. Think of it this way. The polymer which was developed to stop bleeding wounds only works when it is applied. If it remains in a tube or a packet, the bleeding still continues. Or this past week when I picked up one of those roof cables that is intended to melt snow, and on the box it said, "Installation Required" which means, I suppose, some people think that the all they have to do is buy this product and the snow will melt. The task then is for us to apply Jesus Christ to the wounds of the world; through acts of love and tender care. We have to apply it to our own lives by allowing Christ to heal us. We have to apply it to the lives of others in order that their bleeding cease as well. We have to apply it to our society and to the world. We are to be agents of healing.

And while this healing needs to happen in a global context such as when Pope Francis prayed at the Blue Mosque in Istanbul or met with the Patriarch to talk about reuniting the church, it can also happen on the local level. To that end I want to offer you two examples that I heard about this week.

The first was one of our members who offered one of our blessing bags to a veteran in a wheelchair who was seeking aid by the side of a road. He was surprised to receive it, and then when our member happened to be driving by the same street corner a little while later, she saw the man showing what he had received to a friend, and the man's face was filled with joy. There is healing in action. The second is about one of our members who teaches at a local university. He has a Muslim student who is struggling in class and at times feels helpless. After a conversation about her faith in God, our member told her to take an empty chair, place it next to her and every time she felt discouraged to imagine that God was in the chair beside her. This is healing in action.

My friends, part of our calling is to be those who apply the healing love, grace, compassion and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to the world. We are to be those who help to heal a wounded world. My challenge for you then this week is this, to ask yourselves, "How am I being an agent of Christ's healing in this hurting world; in my family, my school, my workplace or my neighborhood? How am I offering the love, grace, forgiveness and compassion of God as it has been shared with me?"